

Defamation of God

By Dr. Paul Winchell

<https://web.archive.org/web/20050205011550/http://protectgod.com/index.php4>

Preface

To a truly faithful Christian every part of the New Testament is taken literally, which includes the following: evil creatures come from the supernatural world to inhabit our bodies and cause a variety of maladies, illnesses and diseases. These ghastly invaders are sent by Satan and include devils, demons and unclean spirits. The Pope himself, who suffers from Parkinson, is so sure of this premise that the Vatican permits exorcism, in certain cases, even today in the 21st century. Of course, great care is taken to first determine that the "disease" is not a purely psychological manifestation, but once assured that the person is truly "possessed" by these visitors from Hell, a very reliable priest commands these malevolent imps to depart from the stricken individual in the name of Jesus.

Scripture tells us that Christ Himself spent a great deal of time and energy "curing" the deaf, the lame, the blind and victims of the plague by "casting out" these demons, devils and unclean spirits and even taught his disciples to do likewise. Is it possible that the beloved Deity of millions didn't know that microbes and heredity were responsible for sickness? If millions of Christians were right, it would appear to be a sheer waste of time and money to pursue stem cell research. Apparently President Bush has been opposed to it from the beginning.

It is amazing that people who are generally rational in worldly affairs seem to be so primitive about religious matters.

Millions of worshippers go to their churches unaware that the book they use to honor God does the opposite. The Bible accuses our Creator of unspeakable atrocities against mankind and defames His sacred image. Shouldn't a sacred book, like the Bible, portray a Being of the highest ethical qualities for man to emulate? Unfortunately, a painstaking investigation of the Bible reveals that Scripture defames God by maligning His character and morality.

I have had a long and successful career and throughout my life, have been a God-fearing man. Later on in my life I found I had time to do things I had never had time to do before - so I began reading. Wanting to know more about God, I chose to read the Bible, possibly the most influential book in the history of mankind. To be blunt, I did not like what I found. Aside from its numerous contradictions and historical inconsistencies, the book purported to tell God's story actually classifies him as a jealous and murderous being who punishes men for the very faults he created them with, then sacrifices his only son to redeem these faults. The stories of such atrocities can even be classified as "The Dark Side" of the Bible.

God is being defamed and most people are totally unaware of it. It's time to end an injustice that's been going on for centuries and I've chosen to take a stand because I'm God's child and love my Father. I should say Our Father for we are all God's children and I've spent a big part of my life learning about Our Creator and the meaning He holds for people everywhere. I will protect that sacred image by challenging

every libelous accusation against His character and morality wherever such charges are encountered, even if cherished beliefs are inadvertently trampled upon.

I've been successful in my life and accomplished much of what I originally set out to do. I enjoyed a twenty-year television career as a ventriloquist with my alter egos 'Jerry Mahoney' and 'Knucklehead Smiff'. I made a lot of movies, appeared on most top television shows, created and performed the voice of "Tigger" for thirty-six years at Disney Studios – but all that aside, I must now take a stand and speak out against any denigration of Our Father.

I will begin my presentation by discussing the concept called "God" that every one of us carries in our heads-with wide variations, depending upon our "parental beliefs and practices." We start life by identifying with mom and dad and then deal with our fellow man as though he carries the same image of God that we do. Now, what might such an image be if it is not based upon Scripture? Many will immediately brand him an atheist but the question worth considering is this: "Is it wrong to believe in a god that is not found in the Bible"? We seem to have no problem with adherents of other faiths, even though their sacrosanct beliefs differ vastly from ours. I suspect we can afford to be tolerant in those cases because we're convinced that they worship a myth while our Deity is the only true God; obviously, they believe the same about us.

Introduction

It is almost impossible to relate to the mindset of our ancestors during antiquity for they lived at a time when Superstition was rampant and mankind had not yet emerged from the Dark Ages. Society consisted of the Church and Monarchy and the average citizen operated a fief and had to share his product with land barons. Before you discount any of the following please consider this: Our forebears had no science, no telescopes or astronauts to send pictures of other planets back to them; no satellites or computers and they had no knowledge of the dinosaurs that would have sunk Noah's Ark in a heartbeat. So please let's be tolerant of the concepts they made for they never even saw the land upon which they dwelt; not even a view from a helicopter was available nor a jet, the shuttle and definitely not a space station of today's technology. And how can we ever forget that Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin took photographs of our home from the moon?

We live in a totally different world today than that of our primitive ancestors, with new knowledge and invention. How can we expect them to have thought differently than they did? When they became ill and death seemed imminent, it was understandable and perfectly reasonable for them to pray to a god in their feelings of helplessness. They either got well or they died but presently revolutionary treatment exists. We can receive a new heart and lungs, kidneys or liver transplants and we can do it without prayer. No such option existed during their day so the image of a caring god who might help them get well became a necessity. Currently, even the Pope seeks medical aid for his Parkinson condition rather than rely on prayer alone and there's nothing immoral about that.

We may not give it a thought but many phenomena of the universe, formerly regarded as God's bailiwick, have now been relegated to the commonplace. Television weathermen show us satellites tracking weather systems hourly. It's freezing in New York and sweltering in Miami; people are dying from tornadoes in the Midwest but all is sunny and calm in California. Floods devastate Europe and Asia while reports tell us that droughts are destroying crops in the farmlands. Newscasters announce meteor showers and invite us outdoors to watch Lunar and Solar eclipses, elements of nature formerly accepted as Omens from God. The terrified populace read warnings into every catastrophe, "Behave or the world will come to an end." Today, thanks to Scientific Research, much of the fear has evaporated with rational explanations for natural disasters. Without our current knowledge it was completely natural for earlier civilizations to turn to "the gods" for assistance. It would have been inconceivable if they had not.

The amazing fact is that many people still share the views of antiquity as though the older an idea is the more valid it becomes and that is the greatest paradox of the ages. With all the crimes and wars that go on, the events of 9-11, the sniper attacks, the suicide bombers that murder innocent people, those horrible nightclub fires, the Shuttle disasters and the students that shoot classmates and teachers- perhaps the time has come to leave the fantasies in the ancient past and face hard reality. We live in a "World of Chance" in fact, a Universe of chance where most things happen because they obey the law of "Cause and Effect". But before going any further, I wish to make one thing very clear. The sentiment that follows is not Atheistic but neither is it Scriptural; it is simply one that deals with the concept of God in a purely generic sense.

I take a totally neutral position in this matter. I'm neither for nor against any belief that mankind has held about Deity, past as well as present. I am perfectly comfortable to admit that there is a God and just as open to accept the remote possibility that there isn't. That premise is immaterial to my present

point of view. What strikes me is that we human beings are like computers, far superior of course - for the present anyway - but we function in a similar manner. We make mental Files of everything that we consider important, files of all kinds, and when we "Save" these files they continue to run automatically. Unfortunately, we can't delete them as easily as our silicon counterparts - the human mind is far more complex - but it's functioning is very similar. We start our lives by "Scanning" our parents and "Saving a copy" of their values, attitudes, prejudices and religious beliefs, which become part of our "subconscious". In less technical terms, their constant "suggestions" are actually a form of hypnosis. All parents hypnotize their children to a certain extent, and although not intentional, Parental values frequently persist for a lifetime.

Chapter One

As previously stated, my aim is to defend Our Father against defamation of His character and morality by challenging every falsehood and unjust accusation wherever those insults may appear, even if certain cherished beliefs are inadvertently trampled upon.

In total honesty I must confess that I know nothing about God. No one truly does, not even the Clergy. And what's more, they know that they don't know. I'm not saying they don't believe but belief is not knowledge. While I may not know about God, I do know what the meaning of God stands for. God is kind, wise, patient, loving, just, merciful, and compassionate. To me, that description exemplifies the true meaning of God.

Scurrilous affronts to the Almighty's character and integrity appear in a book that is supposed to venerate Our Creator. The following Files reveal some of the countless libelous examples that are found in the Bible.

Abraham and Isaac

One of the greatest Patriarchs of Scripture is Abraham with whom God makes the first sacred covenant. Jehovah is portrayed as a very insecure Personality in this sequence of Genesis. Although Abraham has always proven his loyalty to the Lord, God decides to put him through a cruel and heartless test. Abraham's beloved son Isaac is the pawn in this drama that pits a father's love for God against that of his only child. Though Abraham has done everything the Lord asked of him, even circumcised himself on Jehovah's command, Jehovah still seems uncertain of his loyalty. He orders Abraham to bring Isaac to a sacred sacrificial altar and murder him. Agonizing over the deed he must perform, Abraham brings Isaac to the appointed spot and prepares to slay him before God. The child is petrified as his father raises the dagger overhead. Just as he is about to plunge the blade into the lad, God stops the test by revealing that He only wanted to know how much Abraham loved him. Who chooses to believe that the Lord is so insecure that He must torment his most devoted servant in such a heartless manner? Does this behavior sound like the Creator of the Universe or that of an immature schoolboy? Ask yourself if this story doesn't defame the image of God?

David and Bathsheba

King David (whose symbol is the Jewish Star) watches Bathsheba sun bathing on her roof and has her brought to his palace where they carry on an adulterous affair. Upon learning that he has made her pregnant, he conspires to have her husband return from the war to sleep with his wife. Uriah is too devoted to His King and chooses instead to return to the front lines. David orders his Generals to place him into the thick of battle and has Uriah slain. Now David can have Bathsheba all to himself and Jehovah is furious with him for what he's done. We wait for Divine Retribution and here is how it comes. When the child is born, God punishes them by killing their baby plus seventy thousand of David's innocent subjects. The two adulterers receive no chastisement and Uriah's murder goes unpunished. Does anyone believe that God would mete out this kind of justice for such a diabolically premeditated crime? Does it make the deed okay because it appears in the Bible? Consider this for a moment; no one knows who wrote this tale during antiquity yet many believe it. One murder is quite enough but the writer turns God into a mass murderer who kills the baby and thousands of David's people that had

nothing to do with Uriah's death or with the adultery. Shall we just accept the word of these unknown authors or give God the benefit of the doubt?

Uzzah

Uzzah is a pious slave who is very solicitous of God's laws. Among those is the injunction that the Ark is most holy and must never be touched. One day, as Uzzah is following the procession, the Ark starts to topple. Instinctively, Uzzah grabs it to stop it from falling and God immediately sends forth a "holy fire" and immolates the poor slave. Would the Lord kill a man for trying to save a holy object? Is the Creator of the universe no more rational than that? Let the punishment fit the crime but Uzzah was merely trying to save the Ark. If you had a neighbor with such a short fuse who murdered someone for a reason like that, what would you do? I'd call the authorities or move. Better yet, I'd just deny that God ever did such a thing.

Let's Give God Credit for Wisdom

There's a scene in Genesis that doesn't give The Almighty much credit for brains. He praises Abel for being a shepherd and has no respect for Cain being a farmer. What sense does that make? Surely God understands sibling rivalry. Well, the remark hurts Cain so deeply that he murders his brother in a jealous fit of rage. Then the boy fears that someone will try to slay him for his crime so God puts a mark upon Cain to protect him and swears vengeance on anyone that tries to kill the lad. Seriously, would God make such a statement when only three people exist in the world? Would Adam and Eve try to kill their only son? The writer sure let that one get away from him because who's left to slay Cain? Would the Lord even take part in such an inane conversation in the first place? Is this not an insult to Our Father's intelligence? Many believe that Moses was the author of this story but how could he know all these details since he wasn't born until later in the next book? As the story continues Cain is driven out of Eden by Jehovah and goes to live in the "Land of Nod" where he meets a nice girl and starts a family. Where did these other people come from?

Let's Re-examine This One

In Sodom and Gomorra, the Bible tells us, God can only find one righteous person living in two large cities so he chooses a man named Lot. God is so furious that Lot is the only one without Sin that He goes on a rampage and sets both cities ablaze and all the men, women and children burn to death. Does that sound like something God would do and is Lot really worth saving? Since God believes he is it must be so, right? Well, God turns Lot's wife into a pillar of salt for looking back at the fire so in order to continue the family name, Lot's daughters get pop drunk and both get pregnant by him and that must be okay with God since He believes that these people are the only righteous ones in both cities. I hope it's becoming clear why I defend the meaning of God against the vilification of His intelligence and morality. Do you think the Bible treats God with respect? The faithful will undoubtedly be angry with me for showing that the Bible defames the Almighty but I hope they will remember that I am defending Him. I feel no resentment towards anyone that chooses to believe these stories because their parents probably also did; I just fail to understand how that makes them virtuous and righteous people.

Moses and the Exodus

After wandering in the desert for forty torturous years Moses guides his tribe towards the land of milk and honey. God Himself leads the way taking the form of a cloud pillar by day and a huge fire at night.

Canaan lies before them and as they prepare to enter, the Almighty tells Moses that he alone will not see the Promised Land. Moses may watch his people go in but he must stay behind because he failed to sanctify the Lord's name to his tribe forty years earlier. Are we to believe that God would be so cruel to his most devoted servant? Can anyone accept that the Lord held a grudge for forty years because Moses failed to sanctify His name before an exhausted band of wandering Jews? Does the Bible endow Our Creator with admirable qualities befitting God?

Joshua

I'm sure we all know that Joshua fought the battle at Jericho, his trumpeter blew three blasts on the trumpet and the walls came tumbling down. The bible tells us that God joined the fight and hurled huge rocks down from Heaven killing more of Joshua's enemies with those rocks than Joshua's entire army combined. Is scripture telling us we are not all God's children?

Adam and Eve

The Bible states that because the first two humans disobeyed God, He brought death into the world. Five million year old fossils clearly show that creatures have always died and always will. Death is a natural appointment -- merely nature acting without intent. God never created death as a punishment or caused women to bring forth their babies in pain as scripture claims. Every creature experiences discomfort during birth and the good Lord is not that heartless. The Old Testament maligns the meaning of God and deprives us of a loving image. There is no doubt in my mind that Scripture defames the essence of God.

The Deuteronomy Horror

In the fifth and final book of Moses called Deuteronomy, God becomes so angry at man for being disobedient to Him that He let's go a barrage of the vilest curses imaginable. If you read Chapter 28 in its entirety, your senses are sure to be shocked. All the plagues and failed harvests that He wishes for man, that will bring starvation and disease are bad enough, but in verse 53 Jehovah says, quote: "You shall eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and daughters". And in verse 57, "The young one that cometh from between her feet-and toward her children which she shall bear, she will eat them—that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD." Unquote! This is blasphemy! The one book that was designed to honor and protect God destroys the most cherished symbol of mankind. A tyrannical, power mad, dictator may feel such vindictive emotions but surely not a wise and loving God. Is it now clearer why I deny that any deity would be so unworthy of the homage that man pays? The righteous people generally become enraged at the slightest affront to their Lord and yet they venerate a book that claims He utters the words I've just quoted. It certainly is their right to believe these stories but are they defending God or has blind fear robbed them of their reason?

PS. since we're still on Deuteronomy let me add one thought. It is widely held that Moses wrote Deuteronomy, yet the chapter ends with Moses being buried somewhere in the mountains. The significant phrase is this: "nobody knows where his sepulcher is unto this day". How could a dead man write that sentence?

If that were not enough of an insult to our intelligence, the Bible also contains "God given laws" on how to treat slaves. These laws are attributed to the Lord, who Scripture claims gave them to man. What is so ironic is that most of these "laws" deal with Hebrew slaves. So the great biblical miracle of parting the

Red Sea let the Jews escape bondage in Egypt only to be sold as slaves in their own land. These laws “given by God” (says the Bible) are cruel and heartless and continue to defame our Father. God never created any of these inhuman “laws”. They were obviously written by slave owners for their own greedy agendas.

Slavery

Nothing you’ve ever read compares with the meticulous instructions for the treatment of slaves as those found in the “good book”. If you think the South was rough on those oppressed people before the Civil War, wait till you read the laws that existed in biblical times. The height of irony is that most of these laws applied to Hebrew slaves. Here are some “God given” laws pertaining to slaves and slave ownership that appear in “Holy Writ”. The following passages are quoted verbatim:

1. If a man buys a manservant, he owns him for seven years. The slave must work in any capacity that his owner dictates. After six years of labor he will go out free. In the event his owner gives him a wife and they have children, he gets freedom but his wife and children remain property of the owner.
2. If a man buys a manservant and a maidservant and they have a family during their debenture, they go out free but their family remains the master’s property. If, after six years of servitude, the slave comes to his master and says, “I love my master, my wife and my children and I want to stay with them and I give up my freedom”, he then he belongs to the master for the rest of his life. Then he must be marked to show all that he is his owner’s property. The marking is accomplished in the following manner. The law instructs the master to take his slave to the door and fasten him to the doorpost with an awl through his ear and the slave is now his forever.
3. If a man sells his daughter as a maidservant, she shall not be freed as other slaves are. If the new master takes her for his wife and she fails to please him in bed, he may take her to a strange land and sell her there. But he will have no further say over her because he has dealt with her deceitfully.
4. If a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod and they die, he will surely be punished. But if either of them continues to live for a day or two, he will not be punished for they are his money.

Note: Now, here are a few laws that applied to everyone, not merely to slaves. The Bible writers claim that Jehovah Himself calls these laws “Judgments”.

Judgments

1. If a man hurts a woman so that she miscarriages, he earns her husband’s wrath and pays whatever price the judges decide.
2. He that smiteth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.
3. He who steals a man and sells him will surely be put to death.

Note: If he kidnaps someone and doesn’t sell him (?)

4. If two men work together and one strikes the other with a stone or his fist, he shall not be put to death but “keepeth his bed. (?)
5. If a master strikes his slave’s eye and he or she dies, let him go free for his eye’s sake.

6. If a thief steals his neighbor's property and no one sees him do it, then he must take the oath of the Lord and receive no punishment.

Note: Suppose he's lying?

7. If a man entices a maid to sleep with him, he must marry her. If he refuses, he must pay the going price of a virgin's dowry.

8. Do not allow a witch to live.

Note: God believes in witches? Scripture claims that God created these laws. Can we blame the pious people of Salem?

According to the Bible, all of God's laws come to us from one man named Moses Levi. Moses was over one hundred years old while he trekked through the desert for forty years leading a tribe of Hebrews known as the Levites. Scripture tells us that he was on Mount Sinai forty days and nights without food or water as God wrote the Ten Commandments and when he came down he wasn't too weak to smash them in a fit of rage. Those that believe this must accept that the leader of a wandering band of Jews chatted "face to face" with the Almighty on a great number of occasions. The Pope who leads millions of Catholics never made such a claim. The Bible further states that the Ten Commandments, and other "laws" that are scrupulously observed by both Jews and Gentiles alike, were handed over personally by God to one man just to teach his tribe. Believers without question have accepted this story for four thousand years.

Clergy

While the Clergy is highly respected in most societies, many people have no idea that Moses was responsible for its existence. During antiquity Moses had to act as judge and jury in solving problems for his tribes. Seeing him so overworked, his father-in-law Jethro, suggested that he empower other tribal priests to act as judges and relieve him of some of the load. Voila! That's how the Clergy was born. As the realization sets in that it was Moses alone who gave us all of God's laws, we may begin to see "men of the cloth" in a different light. Clergymen enjoy a unique position in many societies and they will be with us so long as we continue to believe a one hundred and twenty seven year old man named Moses Levi. By modern standards Moses might be regarded differently. He killed three thousand of his own tribe in one afternoon for worshipping the Golden Calf. Of course he said that God ordered him to do it.

Genesis

The "Pentateuch" comprises the five books of Moses, which is the first section of our Bible. In Genesis we learn of the great flood that destroyed everything on Earth. After creating the universe in seven days, God was dissatisfied with the outcome. The Bible says He felt that humans were inherently evil and the land corrupt. Displeased with mankind, as well as the animals, He claimed that "all flesh" was evil. He grieved with remorse and said he was sorry he had created man and threatened to destroy every living thing on earth. He ordered Noah, who was then six hundred years old, to build an ark that would hold two of each creature He had made. Then God unleashed the worst flood in history and drowned every man, woman and child--and the animals as well. The words used by the biblical authors in describing God's anger are chilling and make the Lord seem monstrous. "I will destroy all life that is in

the land". All in whose nostrils is the air of life, etc.". The words are terrifying, especially when the Bible tells us that God said them.

Note: Since no Bible writers were around during that flood and no one alive today was there either, let's give God the benefit of the doubt and use common sense. Isn't any evidence required of the authors who write these tales?

Elephants must have come from Africa, tigers from India, Kangaroos from Australia and Pandas from China but apparently they made the journey or they wouldn't be here today. One hundred and twenty-five thousand different animals exist on earth and both the Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth Ocean liners couldn't hold them but Noah's little craft carried two of each safely through the deluge.

Note: At this point you may be tempted to become cynical but before doing so, please remember that our ancestors were not in possession of the knowledge that we have today.

Early Beliefs

I'm sure the biblical authors weren't intentionally dishonest since they reported what they believed was true-but they weren't very enlightened either. When they claimed it took God seven days to create the earth we can overlook their lack of knowledge. When they stated "He made the sun on the third day", they had no idea that the world couldn't exist without it. When they casually mentioned, "He also made the stars" they didn't know that the sun was a star. They were also convinced that the sun revolved around the earth, a theory that would have to wait for Copernicus to disprove. Neither is it hard to understand that they thought the earth was flat because centuries later, Columbus's crew thought the same thing. Bishop Usher calculated that from Adam and Eve's arrival the world was six thousand years old. How could the good Bishop even dream that Earth came into being almost five billion years ago? When biblical writers reported that Methuselah's lifespan was nine hundred years and that a man lived for months in the belly of a whale, it was understandable for them to make such mistakes because Science hadn't yet arrived. Were it not for the scientific method, we too, might still believe such "facts". So, should we also blindly believe the things they wrote about God?

The Garden of Eden episode begins on a very tender note. All the animals are friendly; the lion lies down with the lamb and everything is so loving, until God planted the "The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" in the midst of the garden. When the two newly created humans ate some fruit, God became enraged and put a curse upon their heads. He vowed that henceforth man would toil by the sweat of his brow and woman would bring forth her young in pain. The authors of the bible added that because of this infraction, death entered the world. We have all heard that Adam and Eve caused "Original Sin" and yet from these first two humans came all the people in the world. Seems like incest and interbreeding are not as evil as eating fruit. Those who believe that Adam and Eve sired the entire world's population usually shrug and say, "Well, how else could they do it in those days"?

Evolution: We come from monkeys.

Creation: We come from incest.

The tale about the Tower of Babel tries to explain how the many languages of the world came into being. It seems that men built a tower clear up to Heaven, which God saw as a serious threat to His

domain. In order to prevent the workers from reaching Him, the Lord confounded man's speech so the builders couldn't understand each other and that brought the whole project to a halt.

Exodus

In the book of Moses called Exodus, Moses pleads with the Egyptian Pharaoh to "Let my people go" but before the King can respond God "hardens his heart". Each time the Pharaoh seems to show compliance to release the Hebrews, God re-hardens his heart. God is so angry at Pharaoh for having a hard heart that He sends plagues of frogs, flies, lice and hail storms that destroy all trees and plants and swarms of locusts that devour what remains, starving thousands of innocent citizens. While all this is going on everything is calm in Goshen where the Hebrew live. God sends Moses to tell the Hebrews to slaughter a lamb and smear its blood on the doors so He can recognize their homes from those of the Egyptians' when He will 'pass-over' the houses that night. Then He murders the first born of every Egyptian family, turns the Nile and all the water in Egypt to blood and kills their animals but all is well in Goshen where the Hebrew live. Finally, the Pharaoh releases the Hebrews and as they leave God tells them to borrow gold, silver, jewels and raiment from their Egyptian neighbors and "despoil them". Are we to believe that the Lord said "Thou Shalt Steal?"

At last they are out of Egypt and wandering aimlessly in the desert and God re-hardens the Pharaoh's heart to make him give chase. Why would God act like a traitor and try to foil their escape? Did the writers want to set the stage for the great miracle of parting the Red Sea? They wrote that God let the Hebrews walk across the sea floor, then closed the waters on the pursuers and sent the Egyptians to their deaths-"to get honor upon them so they will know I am the Lord". Why is that so important to Him; doesn't He know that He's the Lord? Does He have to go to such extremes just to be secure and feel certain that He's God? The answer is clear. During antiquity people believed in many gods and the authors of these stories were merely reflecting their own beliefs.

Does anyone besides me see that this whole scenario is libeling the image of our Creator? Is this not the most blatant defamation of God's character and morality? Do the scripture writers present the Lord as a role model that will inspire man to emulate?

Two Versions of Creation?

Scripture not only maligns God it also bears a good deal of responsibility for the difficulty that women have encountered in trying to achieve equality with the males. This becomes apparent the moment we begin to read the Old Testament. The book of Genesis reports the arrival of the first two humans beings. After creating the universe, God creates Adam and Eve simultaneously and gives them equal dominion over the earth. So far it looks like Creation is off to a great start. But then it quickly becomes apparent that different writer has taken over because this author tells the story of Creation all over again.

That's peculiar enough but whoever is writing the text now has a very different slant on things. The first version of Creation seemed eminently fair to both sexes but now things begin to change. This time Adam is created first and Eve is treated as an afterthought. She's not even created the same way that he was; this time Eve is fashioned from one of Adam's ribs. This seems to make her a part of man and not a separate entity in her own right. Jehovah even remarks, "I shall call her wo-man because she was "taken out of man". He announces that henceforth, her duty shall be to her husband. If it weren't for that second writer, women might have been spared a lot of grief. We all know the rest of the story, Adam blames Eve for making him eat the "apple" (which many scholars claim is symbolic for fornication) and

now all of mankind will have to suffer on her account. And so, Eve becomes the scapegoat for “Original Sin” because her husband was too chicken to accept some of the responsibility. Because of this infraction, Jesus will now have to be sacrificed in order to forgive mankind for Eve’s “Sin”. Shall we call God a chauvinist or is it more likely that the Bible writers were anti-female? Besides if God had anything to do with writing the Bible why would there be two different versions of Creation?

Note: Another example of gender discrimination occurs as rules are spelled out about what is “clean” and “unclean” by biblical standards.

When a woman gives birth, she is “unclean” and must leave the village and live on the outskirts until once again she becomes “clean”. If the child is a male, she must remain away for one week. If the child is a female, she must stay outside the village for two weeks. Of course the writers claim that God ordered this discrimination. I understand that a great taboo existed against blood at the time but is there any difference with either sex following the birth of a child?

The Old Testament treats men with respect while women are frequently referred to as harlots and whores. Patriarchs are lauded but very few females are given admirable status in scriptural narratives. Delilah betrays the beloved Samson by having his eyes put out. Cunning Salome orders the decapitation of John the Baptist. Males that meander receive no Divine punishment. But wives that are declared unfaithful are taken into the village and stoned to death. These are just a few examples of lady Icons that appear in the Bible. In fact, one sparkling “role model” of the Old Testament is Jael, heralded as a heroine and praised for the brutal murder of a tribal enemy. After seducing him she waits until he falls asleep on her lap. Then she drives a metal spike into his temple.

The highly prized females of the Old Testament are always the virgins. Whenever the armies of Moses conquer a city, they kill all the men, women and children and spare only the virgins. Moses tells his army that “God ordered it that way” for the soldiers. As Moses lay dying, at one hundred and twenty seven years of age, his ministers gather the most beautiful virgins in the land to dance around his deathbed in the vain hope that they can revive him. Try as they may, the Bible reports, quote: “Moses could get no heat” unquote.

Perhaps one of the worst slights to females is barely noticed, occurring in the most revered tenet of religion, “The Ten Commandments”. The tenth commandment reads, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife nor his house, his servants, his ox, his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s”. With one brief sentence the Bible reduces woman to a piece of property. Passages like these have undoubtedly played a role in depriving women of the equality they have always sought and truly deserve. Common sense should tell us that the good Lord had nothing to do with this slight to the ladies!

Common sense is not very common.

Note: I now ask the reader to understand that I am not critical of the Bible in its entirety for there is much that is good to be found within its pages. I am taking issue only with those portions that denigrate the Lord’s character, wisdom and morality.

The Ten Commandments

At the very core of the Judaic-Christian Religion stands The “Ten Commandments”. Almost one third of the world’s population recognizes them as rules of moral behavior. For centuries Kings and Queens, as

well as Popes, have abided by their authority. Both Jews and gentiles alike believe that Moses received them from God on Mount Sinai. The Bible claims that God Himself wrote them in stone with His own finger. The Commandments have continued to wield a powerful influence over mankind throughout the course of history. Even Jesus Christ lived by their principles.

An investigation of the Ten Commandments reveals some discrepancies that may not have been explored before. I invite you to come on an interesting journey and if you have access to a Bible, why not follow along to be sure that no liberties are taken with biblical text. Let's begin with the second book of Moses entitled "Exodus".

Here we find the Hebrews being led out of Egypt by Moses. In Chapter 20: 1 through 17, the voice of the Lord is heard speaking to the children of Israel. The sentence begins, "And God spake these words" etc. Here, Jehovah clearly speaks the Ten Commandments, as they are known to the world. The biblical word spake is significant because Scripture clearly tells us that God spoke the commandments aloud. You'll recognize them as those that the Clergy has consistently taught.

20 1-17: God's voice is heard

Chapter 34 verses 1 through 28 finds God and Moses on Mount Sinai. Moses has just smashed the first set of tablets that God had given him. Please note: the following quote is verbatim.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest". God then supplies a duplicate set and gives them to Moses but when we read what is written, these are completely different from the commandments that we all know! These are laws that deal with tribal morality, indigenous to the culture of that period. You can find them in Chapter 34 Verse 11 through 28 that begins: "Observe thou that which I command thee this day." You may read them at your leisure but for now I offer a truncated version below:

Thou shalt make no molten gods.

Thou shalt worship no other God. Thou shalt eat unleavened bread for the month thou camest out of Egypt.

Thou shalt not make covenants with inhabitants of the land lest thou go whoring after their gods.

Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest.

Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.

Note: The above summary is not a verbatim quote because these verses contain far too many Commandments to list here.

Question: Which set of commandments would you say carries greater authority, the ones that God spake or those that He just gave to Moses? If my analysis is accurate, it would seem to indicate that the commandments which the Clergy has consistently taught for the last four thousand years are the wrong ones!! If you read them carefully you will notice that these Commandments deal exclusively with an antiquated life style. These laws were extremely important to the tribes of Israel but have no relevance to modern life. At the time, a taboo existed prohibiting the making of covenants with strangers (aliens).

Although one other Commandment may seem odd, it was considered highly immoral to cook a lamb in its own mother's milk.

To be certain that no error has been made, see "Deuteronomy" Chapter 10, verse 2. Here God reaffirms that He will write the same words in the duplicate set that were in the original set which Moses broke.

The biblical writers have created a real dilemma. How could such a discrepancy have gone unnoticed for so long? Since God clearly gave Moses two duplicate sets but the Clergy keeps quoting those that God spoke, which ones should we follow? How can we now determine what conduct is morally right and what behavior is morally wrong? The original purpose of God's laws was to define morality for mankind so how can we return to those sound family values that the Church always talks about, if we don't know what they are? It was not very long ago that our own government was seriously considering posting the Ten Commandments in every school, classroom and workplace in America. Our leaders believed it would act as a catalyst to improve our moral values but which set would they have posted? The basic question that remains is this; did God create these Commandments or are they a product of the Bible writers? Let's examine the Commandants that God allegedly spoke and evaluate them.

Commandments

1st Commandment: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage".

Note: The Bible writers claim that once the Jews were finally free, God hardened Pharaoh's heart once again so he would chase after them. Does this not libel Him as a traitor to the children of Israel and the Exodus?

2nd Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or likeness of anything that is in the heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water beneath. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy to thousands of them that love me and keep my Commandments".

Biblical authors have ascribed a frailty to God; human weakness of hatred, rage, vengeance, jealousy, paranoia, insecurity, and spite-qualities most degrading to the meaning of The Lord. Did God create man or has man created God? And can you imagine "The Father" becoming deeply disturbed by the making of images? How can the Catholics resolve this dilemma when their temples are filled with "graven images" depicting the events of Christianity? And notice that God is constantly jealous of other gods. Doesn't the Almighty know that He is the only one? The Bible defames the Father by portraying Him as an extremely insecure and disturbed Supreme Being.

3rd. Commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

I must confess ignorance on this one. How can a name be "taken in vain"? If I say "God bless you" am I taking Jehovah's name in vain? If I say "God damn it" am I guilty of taking His name in vain? If I suddenly realize that DOG spelled backwards is GOD does that qualify to make me guilty?

4th Commandment: "Thou shalt keep the Sabbath Holy".

Jewish people have gone to extremes to observe the fourth commandment. In order to comply, they have created a self-imposed impotence upon themselves. Many pious Jews scrupulously observe the dietary laws of keeping meat and dairy dishes separated. Some families own a second set of cutlery and flatware and never mix the two in order to keep them "kosher. Orthodox Jews must not light their stoves or ovens on the Sabbath. They generally arrange for a gentile friend or neighbor to ignite their appliances for them. They are not allowed to drive or use elevators on the Sabbath, which is very curious since neither autos nor elevators existed in olden times. The taboo extends to a host of prohibitions that would otherwise be considered hardships. Perhaps the origin of these practices stems from a biblical passage where a man was stoned to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath. God is actually quoted as saying, "Whosoever does any work on the Sabbath shall be put to death". What would that do to our economy?

Note: Extremely orthodox Jewish couples consider sex unclean and make love through a hole cut in the bed sheet. This fanatical observance takes place any day, Sabbath or not. Would any god deign to sanction such a practice?

5th Commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

The fifth Commandment, "Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother" creates a multitude of difficulties. It's one thing to show respect for parents but quite another to legislate a child's emotions. Many parents should never have had children in the first place. They have no idea what a child is or what its needs are. In their ignorance, they frequently create life-long problems for their youngsters. This becomes obvious when headlines report children running away from home or even murdering their parents. Young girls frequently become pregnant because of parental reluctance to discuss sexual matters. Scripture bears some responsibility on this issue. It's incredible to realize that we are required to pass a competency test in order to drive a vehicle but need no lessons on how to raise a child.

6th Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill".

The sixth Commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Kill", presents a worthy sense of morality but extremists who bomb abortion clinics and kill its doctors readily circumvent this injunction by professing they are doing God's will. If the good Lord weren't constantly killing people in the Bible this Commandment might make more of an impact on mankind. You know the old saying, "Do as I say not as I do."

7th Commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

No comment on this one because the Bible contains so much adultery, that it's a case of the pot calling the kettle black. What's more, it's no business of scriptural writers to pry into the affairs of men and blame it on God.

8th Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal."

The eighth law "Thou shalt not steal" is universally accepted because nobody relishes losing his possessions. However, God Himself ordered the Hebrews to "despoil" the Egyptians of gold, silver, precious stones, perfumes and incense and used all the booty in the construction of His first tabernacle. (So says the Bible)

9th Commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

The ninth commandment is constantly abused wherever the oath is required. Having suspected criminals take the oath in a court of law is foolhardy. Using the Bible to insure the veracity of testimony is even more absurd. Prisons are filled with sanctimonious liars. Nevertheless, it's surprising how many gullible jurors give added weight to an oath sworn on the Bible. Even elected officials are sworn into office on that book and some of them are far from truthful.

10th Commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant nor his maidservant, nor his ox nor his ass nor any thing that is thy neighbor's."

This commandment makes the wife a piece of property and devalues all women.

If they needed so many laws to keep people honest in the old days there must have been an awful lot of cheating back then. Although laws of conduct were needed in a barbaric society, a code of ethics remains a necessity even today. In my opinion our current society appears no less primitive in its behavior than did the tribes of Moses. "God's laws" didn't work then and it's highly unlikely that they will now. We have seen that some of the rules deserve merit while others are nothing more than pure superstition. However, the value of the commandments is not the issue, the ones that are recognized by the world, is. If you have verified the verses indicated, you will agree that no liberties were taken with biblical text. The discrepancies cited could be found by anyone that does not feel intimidated by Scripture. It seems inconceivable that we have been teaching the wrong Commandments for four thousand years or since the Clergy identified "God's laws".

Note: I have no prejudice towards any faith, in fact I favor religious observance for I sincerely believe that people have a need to worship. I also admire the many churches and synagogues for their help in welcoming new arrivals to the neighborhoods where they can meet and make friends. Besides providing a meaningful social life for adults and children alike, much splendid charity works wouldn't be accomplished without their efforts. It is only the Bible's portrayal of God that I find offensive, not the book in its entirety, for there is also much that is good to be found within its pages.

Chapter Two

Religions

Note: This Chapter contains Theologies of both past and present and examines the origins of man's many belief systems.

Religion has played a major role in every age and every culture. The practice has been with us since humans first evolved on this planet. Men were always troubled by the mystery and finality of death and religion attempted to supply an answer. Since no way exists to prove its conclusions, the religious premise must be accepted on faith.

Primal Religion

To understand how the original notion of a god began we must go back in time to the earth, as it existed when humans made their initial appearance. The dawn of spirituality began with Early Man who stared at his surroundings and wondered who, or what, had created everything that his survival depended upon. Surrounded by predators and threatened by the hostile forces of nature, he devised rituals hoping to gain power over his environment. His first response was a belief in magic. Anthropologists have dubbed this primary form of religion "Sympathetic Magic". Its purpose was to mimic nature by producing similar effects found in natural phenomena. For example, observing that rats had strong teeth, men began to eat rats hoping to gain similar tooth strength; noticing that bears were physically powerful, they ate bears to gain their power and so on. Primitive Man practiced this form of magic for Eons until it gradually began to dawn upon him that he wasn't getting the results he had hoped for. As winter approached and the days grew shorter, he worried that the sun was leaving and the fearful darkness would soon engulf him. Using "Sympathetic Magic", tribes hurled flaming sticks into the nighttime sky in the vain attempt to re-ignite the sun and keep it from leaving.

Death continued to plague him and when a fellow hominid met the inevitable, the tribe rubbed his body with red clay hoping to bring back the pink blush of life to the corpse. More Eons passed before a new thought occurred to some perceptive individual. "What if somebody (or something else) was controlling everything"? That was the beginning of a new concept and, shortly thereafter, man started to propitiate the spirits, who he now thought animated nature. Early Man believed in spirits of trees and grass, of sky and water, plants and animals and every aspect of nature. Primitive Man imagined that an invisible "Spirit World" was controlling things so he created more rituals to appease these spirits and began entreating them to send him animals that were the staple of his diet. This is the origin of Totems, which each tribe invoked to insure success during the hunt. More rituals became a necessity for winning favor of the spirits and great care was taken to avoid offending and incurring their anger, which might result in poor hunting. Man has always feared the "wrath of the gods" in his quest for survival. In this regard, Prehistoric Man was no exception.

Before modern faith came upon the scene, Pagan cultures flourished that recognized the existence of spirits and gods. Both genders were included in the celestial Pantheon and some early societies sacrificed innocent virgins to appease their gods and goddesses. These sacrifices were condoned by the

entire society, convinced that the ritual would protect them. Then along came an Egyptian Pharaoh named Ahknaten with a revolutionary idea of "One God" and the Egyptians had to abandon their religion of Animism and accept Ahknaten's new theory. But one god or many, the motivation behind faith was always the same. Paradoxically though it may seem, worship was designed to mollify man's fear of God.

Personal God: Monotheism becomes a security blanket.

Pharaoh Ahknaten had introduced the world to a new Celestial Wonder, a personal God. The idea of a **personal god** was something totally new at the time. No longer was the function of God merely to control nature, regulate the sun and moon and keep the universe running; a personal god was aware of all His children's needs and would care for them. He could hear the prayers of each individual and comfort them through the long night of fear and despair. Every culture since has relied upon the belief that a **personal god** was watching and listening and would offer help to His human creations. The mind is captivated by the belief that it is in direct contact with the Almighty and that He will grant its fervent wishes. The feeling is indescribable; it is almost hypnotic and the pious mind accepts this belief without question.

The "Spirit World" gradually evolved into the "Religious World."

Hinduism

The Hindu Religion is one of the oldest Theologies on the planet and at the helm is the god Brahman. Because of the tenet of reincarnation it is impossible to debate with a Hindu disciple. Should someone claim that Christ or Jehovah is the one true God, the Hindu will agree and declare that Brahman shows his many faces to the world as all the gods and that each face is merely another incarnation of Brahman. He also believes in many other deities including Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva, Ganeesh, Kali and three hundred million lesser gods. When a pious Hindu has proven himself worthy, after a number of reincarnations, he may reach Nirvana where his soul will find peace and final rest.

Buddhism

The most fascinating religion is Buddhism, which boasts well over a billion followers. Do all the world's religions offer the same "judgments of God" for our behavior, namely the rewards of Heaven or the torments of Hell? Most of them, I'm sorry to say, do. Yet, there is one that resembles no other faith, and that one is Buddhism. Buddhists are faithful to the Buddha but is the Buddha a god? And is Buddhism a religion, in the way we of the West interprets faith? Although the world accepts it as a religion, the one thing that sets Buddhism apart from all the rest is – it has no god. To understand, we must explore the myth that spawned that great Eastern philosophy.

The Buddha, as he is referred to, was not a god but a mere mortal named Siddhartha Gautama Sakyamuni. He was born a prince in the palace of his father. The King decreed that his son should be raised in the palace behind its cloistered walls. As he grew, he wondered about the society that lay just outside the grounds. Never permitted to venture into the town nor mingle with the peasants who inhabited his father's kingdom, he learned nothing about life, as it existed in his country. Associating only with the privileged members of court, he gained no knowledge of the daily lives of the people he would someday rule.

Disquieted by the reality denied him by his position, he developed an intense desire to discover what the subjects of his father's realm were experiencing. He devised a plan to disguise himself and venture forth into the village where he would live amongst the common people. One night, while everyone slept, he slipped out of the palace and entered the city. His aim was to find out how the average citizen existed. Upon seeing that suffering and unhappiness was the legacy of humanity, he realized that he must seek enlightenment in order to help his people. Dedicated to find wisdom, he sat down under a Bo tree and vowed not to return to royal life until he had discovered the secret of enlightenment which he could then endow upon his subjects. And, there he remained, focusing all his attention upon his goal until his goal could be achieved.

The myth does not tell us how long he sat there, but his focus was so intense, that he shut out all thought save that of finding enlightenment. At long last, a beautiful lotus flower sprouted from his navel, signaling him that he had found the wisdom he sought in order to help all humanity. Myths are always symbolic, but the wisdom Siddhartha had found, eventually eased the suffering of his subjects and touched more than a billion hearts throughout the Asian continent.

His odyssey to enlightenment gave Buddhism its "Four Truths" and "Eight Noble Paths" which is accepted as the cornerstone of its philosophy. The "Four Truths" relieved his peoples' suffering, and the "Eight Noble Paths" eased their troubled lives. It is wisdom indeed, and while the Eastern world has embraced it, it seems unlikely that the western mind has the discipline to adopt its dogma. One of the "Noble Paths" offered by Gautama, suggests, "Surrender the things you want that are 'not in your best interests'". There is no doubt that this is genuine wisdom but what society would follow such a noble truth? If it could, would the world have its wars, drug problems, Aids, rapes, murders and a myriad of other horrors with which mankind is constantly plagued? Many of us engage in pursuing our desires despite consequences to our health and safety. When the results are catastrophic, regret, anxiety and depression follow. Sometimes, those who believe their behavior is innocuous are driven to suicide in the attempt to escape their dilemma. Panic and guilt are almost always spawned by self-destructive impulses that man refuses to curb.

The most fascinating aspect of Buddhism is, that while extremely principled in morality, it recognizes no deity. The realization that a belief system, embraced by a billion adherents, can be so lofty in its values without a god at the helm is a huge paradox. And, yet, Buddhists are not considered Atheists by other cultures. They observe rituals and tenets indigenous to other forms of worship. They have their temples, priests, icons and even a bible, yet their mythology recognizes The Buddha--to whom they pray--as the very mortal Siddhartha. Strange though it may seem, religion can exist and flourish without a godhead.

Hebrew

Paying homage to God through Scripture has not always yielded the purest moral image that one could hope for. The "Holy" Bible, which is the cornerstone of the Judaic-Christian faith, meticulously describes the gruesome origin of the Hebrew religion. Fresh blood of slaughtered animals was poured over "holy" sacrificial altars throughout the tabernacle of the wandering tribes of Israel. Gore literally drenched the tent in which "sacred" services were held but the interior was splendidly fashioned of gold, silver and precious stones that were stolen from the Egyptians on God's orders (so saith Moses). The first tribal priests were Moses' brother Aaron and his sons for generations to come. They burned the flesh of bullocks, lambs, turtledoves and other livestock to provide "a pleasing savor to the Lord" as the clergy initiated Peace Offerings, Wave Offerings, Sin Offerings, Heave Offerings and Trespass Offerings as payment for infractions of the Mosaic Code. Two millennia later even the Virgin Mary, being a

Jewess, had to bring a sin offering to the Priests to be made "clean" again after the birth of Christ. So demeaning was motherhood during antiquity because of the archaic taboo against blood.

Christianity

The advent of Christianity officially began after the Crucifixion by the followers of Jesus. The original Church of Christ was spawned by terror and torture. The Auto de Fe, better known as "The "Inquisition", took the lives of thousands that refused to accept Jesus as the "Son of God". In order to make converts, priests poured hot molten lead into their ears and tightened ropes around their heads until their skulls burst. Men and women alike were placed upon the rack and slowly stretched until their arms and legs were torn from their sockets. The only way that victims could stop the horror was to recant and swear that they accepted Christ. History clearly records that Inquisitions took place in many different lands and that conversions were made in the most ruthless fashions, but with the passage of time such bestiality seems to have been almost entirely forgotten.

Mormonism

The Mormon Religion is a form of Christianity, which features the Angel Maroni and the Golden Plates. The text goes on to claim that Jesus Christ returned to Earth and appeared to the American Indians. While none of the Mormon premise can be substantiated, we do know that its founders Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were quite involved in the occult. If a "prophet" appeared today and announced that he was a practitioner of "Black Magic", do you suppose he would he attract many supporters? Well, strangely enough, the "Church of the Latter Day Saints" has become one of the fashionable and respected Theologies of our day and growing steadily.

Islam

The faith of Islam uses the Koran as its Scripture and not many Americans are familiar with its contents. The Koran is the equivalent of our western Bible, containing many of the same Patriarchal characters and fables of the Old Testament. Allah is the god Jehovah-known by a different name-and Mohammed is the prophet of the Muslim people, just as Moses is venerated as the prophet of the western world.

The Religion of Islam had not yet been created as the first book of Moses begins. In Genesis we learn of a "Sacred "Covenant" made between God and the Hebrew Patriarch, Abraham. A loyal servant of the Lord, he is put through a grueling test to prove his love for Jehovah. The Almighty orders him to murder his son Isaac on the sacrificial altar. I'm sure we all know that story and most of us also know that Abraham was the husband of Sarai or Sarah, who the Bible tells us was barren. Sarah entreats Abraham to impregnate her brown-skinned handmaid saying, "that I may have my children by Haggar". A boy is born and named Ishmael but not long afterwards, Sarah becomes resentful and orders her husband to abandon Haggar and Ishnael in the desert. He dutifully obeys and soon their pitiful sobs are heard up in Heaven. God comes down to investigate and upon learning what transpired, makes a "Sacred "Covenant" with them to create a new peoples from the seed of Ishmael. The Hebrew god Jehovah promises them a population as vast as the "grains of sand on the beaches". This, according to Genesis, is the origin of Islam that sprung from the loins of the Jewish Patriarch, Abraham!! Moses is the alleged author of this story and since he, nor anyone else witnessed these Covenants, how he came by this information remains a mystery.

In the New Testament, the same god that made the Covenants with Abraham and Ishmael, sends the Angel Gabriel to a Jewish virgin in Bethlehem to announce the birth of "His Son". Three religions, all vying for the approval of one Father, can initiate a multitude of conflicts, especially if the father shows the slightest trace of favoritism. So, what emotions would one expect to be piqued in "God's children" when God infers that the Jews are His "chosen people"? If this slight did not occur in the Bible, it may have spared a good deal of pain and hatred for Jewish people the world over, anguish they still experience because of it. It seems that planets can remain in orbit without a Heavenly Father's constant approval but not human beings. Is it possible that these biblical Covenants made between Abraham, Ishmael, Mary and Jehovah backfired and caused 9-11, America's second "Day of Infamy"? The implications of this biblical tale are staggering. Despite three covenants made by the same god, man's intolerance of his brother continues. History clearly chronicles that Islam and Christianity have frequently conducted Holy Wars against each other and currently Muslim Fundamentalists seem bent upon the destruction of their brothers in Israel. It is absurd to even consider that our Creator precipitated this man-made madness.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

(For God so loved the world)

Throughout history millions have believed every word in the Bible but today many worshippers feel that the Old Testament no longer carries its original authority. They discount many of its fables on the grounds that although our forebears meant well, they were misinformed. These folks are "selective" worshippers who accept what they find agreeable and discount the rest. Unfortunately, Scripture does not offer that luxury. Either the Bible is the word of God or it's not. And if the Almighty did write it, as many members of the Clergy claim, didn't He know in advance that one testament wouldn't suffice? If Jehovah is infallible why did he need to write a second one? And if He is the author of the New Testament, He has presented himself as a Personality that's not even remotely like the god of the Old Testament. Besides, it's not so easy to ignore the first one because a number of its prophecies are fulfilled in the second. In essence, the two testaments are irrevocably intertwined. Were it not for that fact alone, Christianity would have no gospels and no god figure as well. It is therefore not possible to discount the Old Testament or the entire foundation of Christianity would collapse.

The second part of the Bible finds Jesus Christ paying the ultimate price for the "Original Sin" of Adam and Eve. As the gospel according to Luke unfolds, we meet a young Jewish girl named Mary, who is betrothed to a man called Joseph. Luke claims that Mary receives a visit from the angel Gabriel announcing that she will conceive a holy infant. In Matthew's gospel it clearly states that the angel appeared to Joseph-not to Mary -and it occurred in his dream. Nevertheless, This fulfills the prophesy of the Old Testament that a Messiah is coming. Luke is the only Apostle to tell the story of Gabriel visiting Mary. He must have also considered it advantageous to claim that Jesus was a blood descendant of King David because he provides a genealogy tracing Jesus back to the King. In doing so, he lists forty-three generations from David to Jesus. Matthew also offers a genealogy but Matthew lists only twenty-eight. When we compare both genealogies, we discover that no two names on either list are the same, except for the final name Joseph-the husband of Mary. It therefore appears that Joseph is descended from David-not Jesus. We are left in a quandary because the New Testament has just begun and we are struck by inconsistencies.

There is a striking difference in the Personalities of Jesus and Jehovah. Christ is kind and gentle, filled with love and compassion while Jehovah is portrayed as wrathful and filled, with vengeance. Jesus never

mentions the despicable deeds that Bible writers attribute to Jehovah; not one word about the awful flood that drowned the world or the cruel punishment of Adam and Eve. No mention of betraying the Hebrews by causing Pharaoh to pursue them, the deadly plagues He visited upon Egypt or the slaying of the firstborn of every Egyptian family.. There is no doubt that Christ gave the world a new image of God-one that is not remotely like the god of the Old Testament. He saw the Father quite differently than the way Moses had depicted h Him. In essence, you could say that Christ was also defending God against defamation of His character and morality.

Moses was still revered when Jesus began to challenge many of his principles. Those that obeyed the Mosaic Code considered this blasphemy. But even more so, the priesthood of the day began to feel threatened by his new ideas. One day he went to the Synagogue and berated the loan sharks, threw down their tables and chased them and their animals from the Temple. But he must have known that moneylenders and animal sacrifices were part of Jehovah's rituals. His unusual practice of exorcising devils from those he believed to be possessed frightened the worshippers. Is it possible that Jesus Christ believed in devils? Scripture claims He believed with all His heart. But His "Father" created everything so God must have also created devils, but why? If Satan were destined to become Christ's archenemy, why would God create devils? The answer is simple; He didn't! In olden days people believed that illness was caused by demons inhabiting our bodies. It's hard not to feel compassion for them because medicine, as we know it, hadn't been established and no one would have believed that microbes were the real culprits. Still, if Jesus Christ were God's son why wouldn't he have known that? Recently there has been a resurgence of Exorcism in the Catholic Church as modern prelates "cast out devils and unclean spirits" just as Christ did and some gullible Catholics have been injured or killed by the practice, which only shows that many scriptural passages continue to foster a belief in magic.

Note: Let me try to set the record straight. The Jewish people did not kill Christ. The priesthood, then in power, occluded that he might become a problem and hurt their lucrative practice and the shekels might diminish, so they alerted the Roman government and accused him of trying to overthrow he system. But Jesus was never a thorn in Rome's side; in fact they hardly knew him. When Judas Iscariot betrayed him, he actually had to point him out to the soldiers who could not even recognize him. The Rabbis and high priests, protecting their investment in their temples, were the culprits and it is they that bare the responsibility for his execution. I'm sure this truth will fail to impress many for the myth of the Jewish people being culpable has infected even our youth.

The unforgettable scene at the cross can melt the heart of an Atheist. The pain and anguish have been indelibly imprinted on the minds of the faithful for the last two thousand years. It is excruciating as Christ pleads to Yahweh, "My God My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" and God never answers. The Bible cites several instances where God spoke aloud from heaven, from a cloud and from a burning bush and His voice "was heard by many" but when His Son pleads with Him to answer-not one word; He just silently let Jesus die. Such callousness at the very end of Christ's life defames the very meaning of a loving and caring god. The pious will continue to venerate this book and believe such heartlessness about our Creator-but never shall I.

Note: A careful analysis of the New Testament reveals the fact that Luke and Mark were not members of Christ's original twelve Apostles. Who were these men that wrote gospels and claimed to be eyewitnesses to the events reported in all four gospels? This becomes very significant when we realize that Luke alone gave Christianity three of its most crucial tenets.

1. Angel Gabriel visiting Mary.
2. The Immaculate Conception.

3. Jesus born in the manger.
4. Mark and Luke are the only disciples to report "The Ascension".

The Christian Myth

Some time ago on public television, Bill Moyers presented the renowned Mythologist Joseph Campbell in a fascinating series of interviews. Mr. Campbell has since departed this world leaving a contribution to theological thought that will remain a classic for many years to come. According to this learned gentleman, every faith begins with a myth, which then spawns the rituals, tenets and scripture of that religion. The Christian myth is no exception-says Mr. Campbell-for it springs from one of the more fascinating flights of man's imagination:

In the beginning, Satan was God's most favorite angel. He served his master faithfully and lived in peace and harmony with all the heavenly occupants. One day, God decided to create human beings and ordered Satan that henceforth he would serve man. Lucifer adamantly refused to serve anyone but his Lord, God. Jehovah became livid at being disobeyed but Satan remained adamant and hostility began to escalate between the two powers until a full-scale war broke out in Heaven. It was catastrophic because many innocent angels were killed (?) and the conflict ended with Satan's "fall from grace in the eyes of his Lord". Jehovah banished him to Hades where he would tend the flames of Hell forever more. If it were not for this myth, "The Fallen Angel" might have enjoyed a far better reputation, in fact we may never have heard of the "Prince of Darkness" or of Devil worship.

According to Mr. Campbell, and I should add Bertrand Russell as well, this is the original myth that gave rise to the Christian faith, following which rituals and tenets were added to flush out the religion. By creating a Devil as the epitome of evil, the myth served the purpose of absolving God of all responsibility for the cruelties and injustices that occur in the world. The creation of two separate powers (one for good and one for evil) it eliminated the grays and everything was painted in black and white. Today, when we imagine God and Satan as mortal enemies, we fail to recognize the alliance that the early church constructed. It's almost as though they had formed a partnership between the two powers so that when we die, God judges us and sends the "Sinners" to Satan in Hell. We are well aware of what supposedly awaits us if we arrive in Hades but what happens if we receive our just reward and go to Heaven? Have we ever taken the time to think this through?

We've been conditioned to earthly pleasures throughout life and spent our existence pursuing the things we love. What would we do with ourselves in Paradise? There are no football games or other sporting events to relish. What about the love we have for our cars and our computers? We couldn't drive anywhere and there's certainly no Internet or TV in the Hereafter. It's not very likely that we could find many interesting hobbies to fill our time. Perhaps we could take a trip to the mall for some shopping? No need for designer clothes up here. How about a nice glass of cold beer at the local tavern? I don't think so. Hey, how about sex? Jesus said that all marriages are dissolved in Heaven. Hmm, I would think not. But wait, I mean with my own spouse? I can see where that wouldn't work either because suppose I had outlived three spouses, I don't imagine I'd be allowed to sleep with all of them. No, that would definitely be a Sin. By the way, can one sin while in Heaven? And if one does, can he still be sent to Hell-even after living an exemplary life? Hmmm, better keep on thinking. How about food? Scripture says Jesus ate a hearty meal of honeycomb and fish after He had risen. But does it really make much sense to continue needing nourishment-and toilets for eternity? What if we turned into angels-could we just fly around all day? I've heard some people say they thought they might become pure energy, but what kind? Others say they would be in ecstasy just to sit on the right hand of God. But that's out the

realm of our experience. Obviously, life after death would have to involve the same sort of things that we loved and did while we were alive. So, the Hereafter would probably be like living life all over again. But many good people have led very unhappy lives. So, what would their reward be after a lifetime of righteousness? They undoubtedly fantasize that suddenly they would feel gloriously happy but it just doesn't work that way; happiness is not something we find-it's something we choose. And yet it's not hard to understand why so many dream of going to Heaven. This is a pretty rough world with all its crime, murders, kidnappings, drug traffic and injustice that many experience. It makes one fantasize about a better place somewhere else where everyone is kind and even the animals don't kill each other. It is natural that Heaven would seem to be a better world than this one.

I'm sure lots of well meaning people have dreamed about the Hereafter without giving it much rational thought but suppose, to our amazement, we failed to arrive in either Paradise or in Hades? Would there really be much fun being ghosts and continuing to wander through our old haunts for eternity? This concept of life after death definitely requires more thought.

The Origin of the Bible

In the previous Chapters numerous examples of slander and defamation leveled against Our Creator were shown to be present in the "Holy Bible". Peculiar though it may seem, the faithful will probably fail to recognize them. Before continuing to examine the Theologies of other cultures, it is significant at this point to discover just how our own "Holy Book" came into being.

The "Judaic-Christian" Bible was created approximately 300 years after the Crucifixion. It was during the third century in the Ottoman Empire, that Emperor Constantine of Turkey settled the religious strife in his country by converting to Christianity. Constantine then decided that a "Holy Book" was needed and ordered his Cardinals to collect old folk tales, Hebrew stories and assorted gospels written by unknown authors after the Crucifixion. Among the many works collected were the five books of Moses, the gospels according to Peter, according to Mary, according to James, according to Thomas, according to Matthew, according to John and a plethora of Apocryphal fragments. After much deliberation, the Cardinals cast their votes for the manuscripts they wanted included in one cohesive volume. It was this compilation of themes that later came to be known as the "Holy Bible". Consider this: if those men had chosen other works, the faithful would now believe different authors. The revered Bible that millions of worshippers have accepted as the "Word of God" was created by a vote of men.

Note: I repeat, I'm neither for nor against any religious practice because I believe that people have a basic need to worship. But must religions create fearful gods in order for them to work?

A few related thoughts

Egypt was constantly invaded by fierce tribes, known as the Hiksos people that dwelt in the craggy regions of the Tigris and Euphrates. They coveted the Nile River, which overflowed its banks yearly, inundating the fertile valley below and never failed to produce lush verdure in great abundance. Each time the tribes invaded they were subdued and scores of prisoners taken. The Hiksos were an extremely persistent people, driven by the dream of living in an environment that was the antitheses of their sparse homeland. They had been successful in their pursuit twice before and occupied Egypt briefly. Ultimately, the Egyptians prevailed and brought back scores of prisoners to serve as slaves. Soon their

numbers swelled and began to pose a serious threat to the country. The Pharaoh knew he had to get them out of Egypt so he commissioned his grandson (who was found in the bull rushes by the Princess) to lead the Hiksos out of Egypt and into the desert. Biblical authors later claimed this to be the Exodus of the Hebrews led by Moses. This event became the cornerstone of Judaism.

Extremely meaningful is the fact that the Egyptians left a detailed, hieroglyphic account of their history and failed to mention the "Exodus" or that "Hebrews" were ever held in bondage. In addition, they left no report of the Nile turning into blood, the many plagues that allegedly decimated the country or the slaying of the first born of every Egyptian family. All these events are chronicled only in the Bible.

Note: All Religions are "Belief Systems", which means they can be altered by new and compelling information but precisely how has Religion continued to hold such a grasp on the mind? The answer may be found in " Parental programming".

Parental programming

We all have parents and each of us has been "hypnotized" by them to a certain extent. This idea may seem incredulous at first because the process occurs in such a natural manner. The parent is the "hypnotist", the child is the "subject" and religious beliefs constitute many of the suggestions that they make. Perhaps the word "suggestion" seems a bit too clinical-so let's say "imitation" or even "copy" because that's how we learn. Initially, by copying or imitating our parents and then others we later encounter. Day after day as we grow, we re-enforce the messages we get from mom and dad, practically since birth. "I am a Catholic", says one; "I am a Jew", says another, "a Protestant, a Methodist, a Moslem" and so forth, and yet we seldom ask ourselves why? The answer is so academic there seems to be no need to inquire. I am a Catholic because my mother/father were Catholics. I am a Jew for the very same reason. We identify with our parents through the suggestions they make to us. These messages need not be overt because we can receive them subliminally from observing their behavior. One stern look of disapproval can have as potent an effect as a lecture. Noticing their demeanor in a house of worship can reveal their level of religiosity. Do they seem to be at ease with their god or do they appear obsequious and fearful? We incorporate all these signals and frequently, even wear the symbols of their faith to help us feel that we belong. One may wear a Star of David, another display a Crucifix, another completely cover her face- and as we age, the original suggestions enter the Limbic system of our brains and become deeply ingrained habits that feel comfortable and natural to us. So natural in fact, that it never occurs to us we may be following a form of post-hypnotic suggestion. This does not imply that we walk around in a trance, only that our beliefs are unconsciously re-enforced on a daily basis.

As our small world widens and society becomes more meaningful, we discover that most folks share this "suggested-religiosity". That discovery condones the practice and adds a strong sense of legitimacy to the state we're in. But the final realization sets in when we learn that highly respected individuals like government officials, Priests, Rabbis, our Presidents and even the Pope himself, all agree that the information fed to us with mother's milk is valid. The original Parental Suggestions become a tenacious habit that lasts for most, if not all, of our lives. "Habit" may seem a strange word to describe a person's faith but that's what it is-a post-hypnotic habit! Perhaps that may explain why each religion believes with equal fervor in a different god.

Let's take a close look at a person that is hypnotized. He or she will behave in almost any manner that the hypnotist suggests to her. While she sincerely believes that the suggestions are her own thoughts, she will accept ideas for which there is no sensory evidence of reality. In other words, she can be made to believe that something exists which she cannot see, touch, smell, hear or taste. Conversely, she can also be made to "see" and "hear" things that do not exist. "Happenings" that are frequently reported as religious experiences meet these criteria. The "belief" is genuine even if the event is not. Tests have shown that certain suggestions are short lived while others have been known to last for years. Religion is of the long lasting type, often persisting for a lifetime, which may explain why many people-who are quite rational in other aspects of life-continue to believe the outlandish passages in Scripture.

If we examine several different religions we would have to concede that all of them could not be true, yet the adherent of each would insist that only his was valid. He is convinced that his god is the only true god-while the others are false. And he might often defend his belief with his very life, as many have done in the past. What is it that makes religion so delicate an issue that it can seldom be discussed without powerful emotions surfacing? What puts people on the defensive about the subject? And lastly, exactly what are they defending? Most of the time it turns out to be the values of mom and dad. In essence, criticizing the cherished beliefs of someone's parents feels like criticizing his parents. Pleasing one's folks is almost a universal phenomenon, which many continue even after the parents are no longer alive. The hypnotic process therefore, may explain the tenacity and persistence of faith.

"Parental suggestion" is a two-edged sword that can stimulate one's curiosity or even create a state of indifference. Some parents are too stringent in their beliefs and can unintentionally create problems for their offspring. Suggestions containing threats like those of Hell and Damnation imprint the mind with such powerful stimuli that later adult reasoning often fails to expunge them. Only the use of common sense and compelling new information can alter a belief system.

Chapter Three

Defend the Son

The aim of the previous Chapters was to defend the reputation of "The Father". This Chapter will render equal protection for the "Son".

Throughout the Ages every religion offered its believers the same reward, to "live on after death". In ancient Egypt priests initiated "Mummification" as a passport to the "Afterlife". Hindu prelates promised "Nirvana" as a way for piety to escape the tedium of re-incarnation. In short, each faith pledges to cheat death by giving the faithful the prize of living on forever, and Christianity is no exception. This premise has become one of the most tenacious and unsettling concepts ever invented by man. The fear of death is so pervasive in the human mind that men will believe almost anything to deny the reality of ceasing to exist. Faith's objective is achieved by postulating that a Spiritual essence exists in the heavens above and a demonic phantom resides in the earth below. This fantasy is heightened by the promise of being "saved" in Paradise or the threat of being "damned" in Hell and each culture achieves its end with the aid of a book written by men who claimed they "knew" all about God. Fortunately, we live in America where freedom of religion gives us choices and if one chooses to believe this myth it is this prerogative. But if we invest a good deal of ourselves in a book, shouldn't we be certain that it represents God, as we believe God to be? Shouldn't that book portray a Being of the most pure moral and ethical qualities for man to worship? It should but as we've seen, our Bible fails to meet that objective. Instead, it presents a punitive god who is quick to anger, filled with terrible rage and showing little compassion for human fallibility.

I have done my duty to God, as He is portrayed in the Old Testament, by refuting the accusations of biblical authors who falsely accuse Him and I feel satisfied that He has received due process. However, defending the deity of the New Testament will require a different presentation because the gospels depict a Personality that is the antithesis of Jehovah in compassion, love and tenderness. Still, I feel a defense is necessary in light of certain disturbing precepts that are incompatible with the sweet and forgiving nature of Jesus. I have therefore chosen to defend the "Son of God" by creating an imaginary trial held in ancient Rome after the Crucifixion. All of the testimony presented can be verified by a careful analysis of the four gospels.

The Trial of the Apostles

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[Two years have passed since the Crucifixion. Four of Christ's Apostles have written gospels, which surfaced in Rome and caused a furor. The four were arrested and taken to the Forum to stand trial. All Rome fears the possibility of more crucifixions].

Clerk: The Honorable Senators, Cassius, Marcus, Dimitrius and Augustus presiding. Be seated.

[Cassius bangs his gavel and calls for order. The spectators become hushed. The Prosecutor Libus and defense council Marcellus are seated in their respective places]

Cassius: Good morning Libus.

Libus: Good morning Senator.

Cassius: Good morning Marcellus.

Marcellus: Good morning, Senator.

Dimitrius: The Tribunal will hear opening statements.

Libus: The State is ready Your Honor.

Marcus: Is the defense ready?

Marcellus: Senator, before we begin we must settle a matter of the oath.

Augustus: The oath Marcellus? We have a problem?

Marcellus: My clients are not Romans, Sire and in all good conscience they cannot swear an oath to Jupiter. They recognize Jehovah as God of the Jews.

Cassius: Hmm. They are heretics. Then have them swear an oath to their god and let's get on with it.

Marcellus: Thank you Senator. The defense can proceed.

Marcus: The clerk will administer the oath.

Clerk: "Do you swear to your god that the testimony you give this court shall be the whole truth?"

All: We swear in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Dimitrius: We'll hear opening statements now.

Libus: Citizens of Gaul, the State will prove that the prisoners are traitors to Rome. They committed treason by trying to place the Jew, whom our Emperor Tiberius crucified two years ago, on the throne of the Roman Empire. These four men wrote gospels claiming that he was the Son of God, which raised a furor among the faithful. In addition, they claimed to be eyewitnesses to all the events they reported. In the interest of brevity, the State requests that the four prisoners testify together.

Marcellus: Objection! The request challenges protocol.

Augustus: Overruled Marcellus, we'll decide that. Request granted. Escort the prisoners into the witness box.

[The spectators murmur as soldiers herd Mark, Matthew, Luke and John into the witness box. Their feet are shackled making it difficult for them to walk]

Dimitrius: Let's have your opening statement now Marcellus.

Marcellus: Noblemen and good citizens of Rome. The charges presented by the State are false. No witnesses have come forward to corroborate the allegations. The defense will prove that the prisoners acted in good faith as Apostles of the man from Nazareth.

[As Marcellus concludes, Libus approaches the witness box]

Libus: State your names and occupations.

Matthew: Matthew. Tax collector.

Luke: Luke. Doctor.

Mark: Mark. Fisherman.

John: John. We are fishers of men, Sire.

Libus: Fishers of men, how quaint. Let me start with Luke whose gospel claims that from the beginning you all were eyewitnesses. He goes on to report that in the sixth month--let me quote: Chapter 1 verse 26: "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph". In Verse 32: the angel tells Mary she will bring forth a holy son "and his name shall be Jesus". You say she was espoused to this Joseph and still a virgin?

Luke: Gabriel appeared to Mary before she and Joseph came together.

Libus: Really? Just how long had the two been-espoused?

Marcellus: Objection to the snide innuendo Your Honors.

Cassius: Sustained.

Libus: Who else reports this Angel Gabriel visiting Mary? (No reply) Only you make this report Luke? None of your colleagues mentions this visit?

Luke: No Sire. I alone reported Gabriel telling Mary.

Libus: Your Honors, please notice that Matthew remains silent yet he too reported the incident.

Matthew: Yes, but I stated the angel told Joseph not Mary.

Libus: Told Joseph? Hmmm. Allow me to quote from Matthew Chapter 1-verse 20: "Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying Joseph--".(stops) Joseph was not awake at the time?

Matthew: No sire. He was asleep.

Libus: This angelic visit that you report, occurred in a dream?

Matt: That is correct, Sire.

Libus: How can one man know the content of another man's dream?

Marcellus: Objection. That calls for speculation.

Marcus: Sustained.

Libus: But Senator, my question has great relevance. This event is the very cornerstone of Christianity. If, as Matthew claims, Mary did not receive the angel's visit and Joseph was asleep, can Matthew's report be considered viable evidence?

Marcus: Dreams do not qualify as evidence Libus. Therefore, Matthew's report is considered "Hearsay". Only Luke's testimony is deemed relevant.

Libus: Then I ask the tribunal to note we've only just begun and already we have discrepancies.

Cassius: So noted. Continue please.

Libus: Which gospel reports the birth of Christ in the manger?

Luke: I report that glorious event, Sire.

Libus: Only you again Luke?

Matthew: Excuse me Sire. I report the star of Bethlehem and the wise men called the Magi.

Libus: Yes Matthew, but you state that Jesus was born in their house not in the manger and Luke makes no mention of a house or of this-Magi. Now which version is correct?

Luke: Mine Sire. As God is my judge, it was in the manger.

Matthew: I disagree, Sire, Jesus was born in their house.

Libus: Senators, another discrepancy for the record?

Dimitrius: So noted, Libus. Continue.

Libus: Were either of you present at the time?

Matthew: I was not present.

Luke: And I was not born yet, Sire.

Libus: Then, Your Honors, is this not also considered hearsay?

Marcus: If neither man were present, I would say it is.

Libus: But, neither man was present at the angel's visit either.

Augustus: Then "Hearsay" would also apply in that case unless-substantiated by another witness.

Libus: I see. John, does your gospel report these events?

John: No Sire, mine does not.

Libus: Mark, does yours?

Mark: No Sire.

Libus: May I ask why not? Aren't they crucial to Christianity?

Mark&John: Oh, most certainly, Sire Very important indeed.

Libus: Then why have you two failed to mention them?

Mark & John: (Silence)

Libus: We'll come back to this. Matthew, I'm fascinated by your report. You write that the moment Jesus died, wait-let me quote this exactly: Matthew verse 50: "And the graves were opened: and many bodies

of the saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many". Extremely powerful images you have described. Who else witnessed what Matthew reports? Luke? Mark?

Luke: Not I Sire.

Mark: Nor I Sire.

Libus: Come, come gentlemen, corpses strolling through the city? These are no everyday occurrences. (Silence) Senators, surely they must have noticed these walking cadavers.

Marcus: You've made your point Libus. Now move it along.

Libus: Mark. Tell us your recollections of these amazing events that Matthew describes.

Mark: I recall seeing nothing like that Sire.

Libus: You're testifying under oath that you recall no dead saints walking about the city? But Matthew claims they were "seen by many". Were you watching something else, Mark?

Marcellus: Objection, he's badgering the witness.

Dimitrius: Sustained Marcellus.

Marcellus: Thank you Senator.

Libus: But Senators, none of the witnesses corroborates Matthew's claims.

Dimitrius: John has not testified to that effect.

Libus: John, tell us what you recall about these unusual happenings.

John: (Silence)

Libus: John? Senators, instruct the witness to respond.

Cassius: The witness will answer the question.

John: I say unto thee Senators, if what Matthew describes had occurred, I most certainly would have reported it.

Libus: Then none of you corroborate Matthew's claims?

John: Who knows Sire? Perhaps it did happen, perhaps not. I simply do not recall.

Libus: Really? John, do you know your Ten Commandments?

John: Verily I do.

Libus: What is the fifth?

John: Honor thy father and thy mother.

Libus: Then let me read how Matthew quotes Jesus: 10-37, "He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me". Does that sound like honoring father and mother?

Matthew: But Sire. What the master meant by that--

Libus: A simple yes or no will suffice.

ALL: But the master was only-

Libus: Yes or no!

Marcellus: Objection! He's being hostile.

Marcus: Sustained.

Libus: Did Jesus ever write a word himself for his followers?

ALL: No Sire. // The master wrote nothing himself. // He instructed us to do so//We wrote everything that he said.

Libus: Then we have no alternative but to accept your words do we?

Luke: But we wrote what he taught.

Libus: Perhaps you wrote what you thought he taught.

Marcellus: Objection! They have already responded.

Augustus: Objection sustained! Libus, our patience is being strained.

Libus: Mine as well Your Honors. Just listen to Mark's report that Jesus rebuked a fig tree for being bare out of season-then cursed the tree for having no figs. Are we to believe that an intelligent being acted in that manner--toward a tree?

Mark: Tis the truth Sire. We all were present and observed it.

Libus: You then write, "The tree withered away and died".

Mark: It, it did, Sire. We watched it happen.

Libus: What did your master say after that?

Mark: He said, "Have faith in God".

Libus: Hmm, perhaps it was only a fig-ment of your imagination Mark?

(The spectators laugh)

Marcellus: Objection! Senators, this is a court of law not a theater for amusement. The prosecution is making a mockery of this trial.

Cassius: Sustained!

Libus: Senators, he says I make a mockery? Then listen to this one. When the Apostles needed money to pay the tax collector, Jesus instructed Matthew in: 17-27: Here Matthew, since you wrote this you read it to the Tribunal.

Matthew: (reads) "Lest we offend them, go thou to the sea and cast a hook and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: Take that and give it unto them for thee and me".

Libus: Do you expect this learned body to accept such an inane story? Are we to believe a wise teacher that Christ was supposed to be, actually told you to do that?

Matthew: T'is the God's truth Sire. I swear it!

Libus: Of course, you swear it. You also swear he was the Son of God don't you? And John, you state that while Jesus was on the cross, one of our soldiers thrust a spear into his side and blood and water gushed out.

John: Thou art correct Sire. That is what I wrote.

Libus: I notice your three colleagues make no mention of that. Anyone care to substantiate John's testimony?

All Three: Sire, I recall no spear // neither do I. // Nor I Sire.

Libus: The three of you stood right next to John and neither of you saw blood and water spurting from the wound?

Matthew, Mark and Luke: I saw no wound // Nor a soldier thrust a spear, Sire// I saw no blood or water.

John: On my honor Senators, I saw it. God knows I do not lie.

Libus: Your friends don't seem to agree, John.

Marcellus: Objection. My client has implied no falsehood.

Cassius: Sustained. Libus, it might be wise to leave this now.

Libus: But Senators, this event cries out for confirmation.

Marcus: Abandon it!!

Libus: Yes Sire. Matthew and John, both of you report that eight days after the Crucifixion, Jesus walked through your closed door-and asked for food?

Matthew: Verily Sire. Thou art correct.

Libus: You're testifying that you actually saw him?

John: Yes Sire. He came to us in Galilee.

Libus: Then why have Mark and Luke failed to mention such an amazing happening?

Luke and Mark: er, Our only concern Sire, was with his hunger.

Libus: And that's why you didn't mention it? (They nod) Did you feed him?

Matthew and John: That we did Sire He brought us a fish // We had some honeycomb and a bit of meat. He was famished Sire.

Libus: Are these Senators to believe that after being dead for eight days he re-appeared and craved real food?

John: Tis true, Sire. He said unto us "Handle me and ye shall see I am flesh not spirit".

Libus: Wait. Let me understand this. He was flesh yet he walked through a closed door? He ate real food and Matthew says after eating he vanished right before your eyes. Was this the "Ascension" that you speak of?

Mark: Not right then Sire. But both Luke and I reported the Ascension of Christ.

Libus: The Ascension is a crucial tenet of Christianity isn't that so Matthew?

Matthew: Oh yes, verily Sire. Verily.

Libus: Do you agree John?

John: Indeed I do Sire. Indeed.

Libus: Then please explain why both you and Matthew didn't mention it?

Matt & John: Oh, I believe we mentioned the Ascension. // Did we not, Sire?

Libus: No. Not one word from either of you. Luke and Mark are the only two that reported the Ascension. Senators, isn't it amazing that that Luke and Mark continue to report issues vital to Christendom while John and Matthew fail to even mention the Ascension of Christ? John claims that Jesus bore his own cross while Matthew, Mark and Luke all identify Simon the Cyrenian as the bearer. We continue to hear one conflicting report after another. Whose testimony can the Court possibly believe?

Cassius: That is for us to decide Libus. You know your role. Now move on.

Libus: Yes Your Honor. John and Matthew, I've read and re-read your manuscripts with great care and noticed that both of you constantly talk about Hell and damnation.

John: T'is true Sire! For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son to save man from going to Hell.

Matthew: And he that believeth on Him that sent Christ shall not be condemned to Hell but shall receive everlasting life.

Libus: That's precisely what I mean! You two go on and on allegedly quoting Jesus about Hellfire and Damnation. For example, (flipping through the pages) here! "If your right eye offend thee, pluck it out

(mumbles) whole body be cast into Hell" And here again "Hell" again "Hell", "Hell". (stops) You men are Jews; in fact all the Apostles are Jews and your master as well. You were raised with the Mosaic Code so where would Jesus have learned about Hell? There's no mention of Hell in the five books of Moses. These aren't Christ's words they're yours' aren't they? Be honest; he's not here to defend himself.

Both: Sire, we simply report what the master-----

Libus: Yes of course you do. And here again you make him say (reads) "Hell, Damnation, Hellfire, Hell where the worm dieth not. Again Hell, Damnation, and again! (he stops) Both you and John quote Jesus, constantly dwelling upon Hell and Damnation. You make him seem obsessed by it, consumed with it. (pause) It hardly seems reasonable that one who loved and sought only to do good would want to frighten those who believed in him. You said he wrote no word of his own so we only have your gospels to rely upon. These are your words aren't they? There's still time to recant your testimony.

Marcellus: Objection! This is despicable! I have never seen such obvious intimidation.

Libus: Senators, hear me out. When Pontius Pilate handled the Christ matter, I assumed the problem was resolved but when theses gospels surfaced in Rome their blasphemy created such a firestorm I had the prisoners arrested and brought this trial to the Forum. I was convinced they were heretics and traitors to our Emperor, Tiberius Claudius Nero. But now I feel impelled to uncover the truth before we act too hastily once again. The whole purpose of this trial is to separate fact from fiction and to be frank I am finding it hard to believe that a Being of such love and compassion could have this dark side to his nature. A man who forgave Sinners during life does not become a tyrant after death and pursue them beyond the grave to damn them to Hell. I reject the notion that Jesus was the author of Hell and Damnation and suggest that John and Matthew are the ones that created the concept. Senators, grant me a moment more and listen to the words of the man we crucified. (He reads)

"Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you. Blessed be them that mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed be the weak for they shall inherit the earth. If I, thy Lord and master, wash your feet ye ought to wash one another's feet. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and lowly of heart and in me ye shall find rest unto your souls. The son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and give his life as a ransom for many. Resist not evil but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also and if a man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Judge not and ye shall not be judged, condemn not and ye shall not be condemned, forgive and ye shall be forgiven. Whosoever shall speak a word against the son of man, it shall be forgiven him. Love one another as I have loved you".

Libus: Senators, there have been so many inconsistencies in the testimony we've heard today that we don't seem to be talking about the same man. Matthew and John depict Jesus as a split personality, which I find completely inconsistent with the words I've just read. I may be Rome's Prosecutor but my concern is with the truth and I intend to uncover it before we act too hastily and make another mistake! Can any of the prisoners name the original twelve Apostles of Christ?

Mark: Oh, yes, Sire, with the greatest of pleasure.

(Alternating as they help each other)

All four: Let's see, there was:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Simon known as Peter | 2. Bartholomew |
| 3. James, brother of John | 4. Simon the Canaanite |
| 5. James, or Jude | 6. Andrew Son of Alphaeus |
| 7. Philip | 8. John |
| 9. Matthew | 10. Simon called Zelotes |
| 11. Thomas and | 12. Judas Iscariot |

Libus: Each one of your gospels contains a list of the twelve names you've just mentioned and one other gospel called "Acts" also lists those twelve.

ALL: True, Sire true.

Libus: Do the names Luke or Mark appear on any of those lists?

John and Matthew: (startled) Why no, Sire they do not.

Libus: In the gospels that Luke and Mark themselves wrote, do their names appear on those lists?

Matthew and John: No Sire. They do not.

Libus: I ask the Tribunal to take judicial notice of this crucial evidence.

(The four Senators rise) The Tribunal takes judicial notice.

Libus: Then would it be fair to say that both Mark and Luke were not members of the original twelve Apostles and therefore could not have been eyewitnesses to the events they reported?

Matthew & John: (reluctantly) Yes Sire. It seems so.

Libus: Members of the tribunal. In light of this incontrovertible evidence, the State moves that all the testimony of Mark and Luke be stricken from the record and declared to be "Hearsay". Now, only the testimony of Matthew and John is relevant in this trial and they scarcely agree on anything. John reports Jesus bleeding on the cross and Matthew sees no blood; Matthew reports dead saints walking and John sees none. There can be only one resolution to this matter and that is for Your Honors to decide.

Cassius: The Tribunal reviews these proceedings and will render its decision tomorrow morning. Take the prisoners away.

[Everyone is shocked into silence as the soldiers lead the four men out of the witness box].

The End

I need not defend Jesus now since Libus did it so eloquently- but let me repeat his words:"A Being of such love and compassion who forgave Sinners during life does not become a tyrant after death and pursue them beyond the grave to damn them to Hell".

A Final Word

Over the years the Bible has gone through numerous revisions yet each time the anger and threats of the deities have never been mollified. Religion would remain just as effective if the offensive portions of Scripture were expunged and no harm would befall the faithful if gods were portrayed with greater tolerance of man's weakness by transcending the pettiness of their own too human emotions.

Depicting the Jews as "God's chosen people" offends the sensibilities of other ethnic groups and we know in our hearts that the Lord is not biased for we are all His children. And I believe we would feel more kindly towards one another if the violence and cruelty were culled from the text. We protest over violence in television, violence in movies and even violence in computer games but does religion truly need a god that commits mass murder, destroys a country, kills Egyptian babies, sends plagues that torment thousands, betrays Hebrews and drowns their pursuers? And that's mild compared to drowning the entire world because He was sorry He made man. How can man be happy feeling that God believed he was evil? To make matters worse the Creator of the Universe is portrayed as an insecure, almost paranoid Being who believes in witches and is obsessed with other gods. At the very least, isn't some of that text expendable?

I'm past eighty now and fairly certain I won't see ninety but I'd like more of a choice than Hell or Paradise when I go. Now that we now know the Bible was created by a vote of Emperor Constantine's Cardinals, wouldn't we all be better off if other options were offered - or is fear of what happens after death the glue that holds it all together? I hope not because I believe better of God.